

Get Your Baby to Sleep Through the Night:

Oh man. I know I'm stepping on controversial turf here. I mean who would've ever thunk (not a word but it should be) that sleeping styles would be such a ferocious topic of debate. Jeez, I mean even the academic community practically resorts to name calling when it comes to the issue of healthy infant sleep habits. The only reason I dare throw my two cents out on the topic is because I feel strangely compelled to share my synthesized version of the information I gathered from qualified researchers.

How to Get Your Baby to Sleep through the Night!?

So here it goes, in a nutshell the best sleep environment to promote healthy bonding and maximize sleep for all parties involved. Basically psychologists are split down the middle when it comes to the topic of co-sleeping... that is sharing a bed/room with baby. Some experts say it promotes healthy psychological attachment because it helps baby to feel more secure in their bond with parents. Opponents argue that co-sleeping can cause marital distance and a baby that is over-dependent on parents.

BTW, there are very safe and very unsafe ways to co-sleep and if you EVER sleep with your baby, even for-an-hour-by-accident-every-now-and-then-when-baby-is-sick then please buy the book *Sleeping with Your Baby* by Dr. James McKenna. The book gives you the details on baby safe bedding, weight limits and other extremely important precautions.

Okay, with that little PSA out of the way I can move on.

So which experts do you listen to, if any? Well, I say listen to your guts and then get advice from the experts that confirm what your guts are telling you. What I mean by that is, go back to biology.

Basically babies that nurse, eat more often than their bottle fed counter parts. That's one of the many reasons babies have a biological drive to be close to mom. That's also why it's so hard to get them to sleep in a crib in a room down the hall. Every natural drive in a baby says "stay close to mommy" and every natural drive in a loving parent says "comfort crying baby".

There are way too many misleading books and theories that villainize the infant, as if the baby has a maniacal plot to ruin the sex and sleep life of said parents. I could really go on and on about how and why that is so twisted but I'll spare you the rant for now.

Basically, there are hundreds of different, healthy ways to nurture your little heat seeker's desire for closeness with you. Since I'm not writing a book and you don't have all day, I'll be brief.

Big picture? It's not healthy to let your baby "cry it out". If a parent is sensitive and attentive during the day, why should that change at night? A lot of kids recover from the stress of the cry it out approach because many of the parents that employ that method of sleep training are doing their best and make up for sad nights with happier days. Thank God for that. There really

are many awesome parents that use the cry it out method... many that I have a lot of respect for in fact but it still doesn't mean they've made the strongest call when it comes to this issue.

While I do agree that "people have to find a way that works for them" and "every family and child is different" I also believe that these statements are only true to an extent. When it comes to sleeping arrangements there does exist a better, best, good, fair and terrible way to treat a child at night.

The best case scenario for most babies is to sleep in mommy and daddy's room or in a baby-safe-adult-bed with two parents that sincerely enjoy the arrangement. If parents resent the baby for taking up real estate on the pillow top then this is no longer the best case scenario. No one likes to get stink eye and yes, babies pick up on your bad attitude, so if you hate it don't do it. It's all about perception but if the thought of this arrangement is unappealing I'd encourage you to work on your perception if possible.

Why? SIDS rates are lowest in countries where co-sleeping is the norm. No one is sure why this is true but one theory is that the sound of adult breathing helps to regulate infant breathing. Even though the exact reason is still unconfirmed most sleep experts agree there is some biological reason for this life saving health benefit. So why is it that we've gone to such great lengths to get those little suckers to sleep far away from us?

For a thousand different reasons, in the west, we've made it weird for baby to join mommy and daddy for zzzzz's. I suggest that we're weird for making it weird! There's nothing more natural than to nurse your sweet baby to sleep. Don't let anyone tell you that's unhealthy because that's simply not true.

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I think I know what the next questions are:

- If I let my baby sleep in my bed how will I ever get him out!
- How will my spouse and I uh hem... *wink*.
- Won't I role over on the kid in my sleep?

These concerns are very common and actually pretty easy to answer. If any of you care to hear my take on those issues I'd be happy to create a separate post. And I get it bed-sharing isn't for everyone. The real moral of the story is "PICK UP YOUR CRYING BABY!". Comfort them, nurture them at night, just like you do during the day.

Be aware that long crying spells raise your baby's stress hormone (cortisol) unnecessarily. Elevated cortisol levels have negative effects on health at all ages. Again, this is another massive topic I'm only brushing passed. I encourage you to research the consequences of stress on the body. Your baby doesn't understand that you're just in the next room. They can't comprehend that "they're perfectly safe". They only know that it's dark, they're alone and their

only means of communication is being ignored. It's scary for them so trust your instincts and go comfort them! They won't want you at night forever. This too shall pass.

For me it passes around 18 months. By then they're weaned and starting to do those deadly sleep ninja moves. The transition is gentle and sensitive to the ninja's feelings.

Believe it or not, three kids into it and I've honestly never been through sleepless nights with newborns. My missing zzz's come from illness, nightmares and the occasional bed-wetting but that's what we sign up for as parents right?

p.s. Feel free to share this blog post with any and all parents if you're so inclined. I'd love to open a larger discussion.

Know someone with a baby or toddler? Want to help them get more zzz's and more bonding time with baby? Then for the love of God... share this article with your friends and family! Do it now before you forget. Then visit my blog for more tips on how to enjoy your children more. Parenting is tough enough. Visit "Mother Mouth Uncensored" to be refreshed and encouraged on your path to staying sane in the midst of it all.

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